

Dear Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission,

Americans cherish the freedom of the press -- and the diverse viewpoints of that press. Your Chairman, Mr. Powell, recently stated in an interview that the American press is the envy of the world. Consistent with this logic, the FCC should not tamper with the current system, without fully considering and without further public input, the controversial proposal before your Commission this Monday on further deregulation of media ownership.

In my opinion, this deregulation would benefit a few at the expense of the rest of us. Modifying the ban in most cities on cross-ownership of television and radio stations and newspapers will have serious repercussions for every American. A similar deregulation of radio, through the 1996 Telecommunications Act, has resulted in a 30% decline of independently-owned radio stations in the United States. This decline has reduced Americans' access to local news via radio. In at least one instance local authorities were delayed in broadcasting important emergency information to the local populace because the "local" radio station was broadcast from out-of-state. Accelerating the disappearance of independent local media by further deregulating television and newspaper ownership is the wrong direction for this country.

Many Americans are concerned about the future of their media, and the effect this decision will have on them. Thousands of Americans have written the FCC to oppose this rule, and members of Congress from both parties have voiced their protest and requested that your Chairman testify before them on the matter. Yet the FCC appears poised to ignore the interests of regular Americans by allowing a few massive conglomerates to control our local news sources.

This proposed deregulation threatens the ideals of America--the ideals of openness, free speech, free expression and free discussion, which are the backbone of our Constitution and our democracy.

Therefore, I urge you to take the following actions: (1) Delay the June 2nd vote by the FCC. (2) Testify before Congress so that the Representatives of the American people can have the opportunity to question the representatives of the Bush Administration. This should include a clarification and explanation by members of the Commission as to free travel and other benefits obtained from the regulated industry, as well as records of meetings with interested parties. (3) Finally, allow for, and consider, additional public input. The FCC must provide sufficient opportunity for public input on a decision that affects every American.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
Donald C. Weber